

Someone's Slip Is Showing

No one may say who is in charge of fabricating the fairy tales that are published from time to time to explain why some American has been caught taking photographs in the Soviet Union. Perhaps Walt Disney. It didn't take more than 48 hours for the camouflage that had been wrapped around Mr. Powers' U-2 flight to fall apart - no, the plane was not gathering weather data. And now we have the story of two young men, Harvey Bennett and Mark Kaminsky, who have just been kicked out of the Soviet Union, and who, the State Department announces, were "bona fide tourists."

Assuming that all Russians are deaf, dumb and blind, was it wise to expect them to take at face value the explanation these Americans gave for their mission to Moscow, Leningrad, Minsk, Kharkov, Kiev and Uzhgorov? What they told reporters was that Mr. Kaminsky, a graduate student at the University of Michigan, had gone to gather material for a book he proposed to write, but for which he had no publisher, entitled "Soviets Talk About Peace and Prepare for War." What Mr. Bennett was doing was not reported. He was identified simply as unemployed, but having a wife and three children in California.

They were enabled to visit the Soviet Union, they said, by a grant of \$2,000 from the Northcraft Educational Fund of Philadelphia, the whereabouts of which is as mysterious as the rest of the story. Any Russian with access to a Philadelphia telephone directory would have had a hard time locating that Fund; no telephone is listed under its name; the Internal Revenue Service says Northcraft is not a tax exempt educational organization.

Moreover, some minor functionary of the Soviet secret police might also have done some arithmetic, adding up the cost of the trip the young men took and subtracting it from \$2,000. They rented a car in Finland and drove into and around the USSR. Two round-trip tourist plane fares to Helsinki (tourist) is \$1,314. The customary cost per day for accommodations in the Soviet Union is \$30 - \$60 for two. Considering their extensive itinerary, a stay of 30 days would appear minimum - that comes to \$1,800. Car rentals run about \$10 a day, or \$300 for 30 days. And there might have been some incidental expenses, say for film (they took quite a few pictures, which were confiscated).

After having sentenced Mr. Kaminsky to seven years imprisonment for espionage, the Russians decided to send him and Mr. Bennett packing. They are now back home. Why this unusual act of clemency? Were the Russians incapable of taking the episode seriously? Is there a Soviet sense of humor?

It would be interesting to have the view of US intelligence experts on the point Drew Pearson made last week - that when the CIA injects its operations into the tourist and people-to-people program it puts other legitimate tourists under suspicion and jeopardizes one of the few successful programs for peace." It would be interesting, too, to know how far our intelligence agencies are prepared to go in compromising the standing of bona fide American philanthropic foundations by using them as cover for espionage.